



Maricopa County

News Release

Environmental Services Department

1001 N. Central Avenue
Suite 401
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Phone: 602-506-6611
TDD: 602-372-0622
Fax: 602-506-1874
www.maricopa.gov/envsvc

For additional information: Johnny Diloné, Public Information Officer
Environmental Services Department
Office: 602-506-6611
Cell: 602-525-2423

Julie Pasquinelli, Public Information Assistant
Office: 602-506-0386
Cell: 602-525-4348

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Weathering the storm

Safety tips to recover after storms and floods

Storms and rainfall may be a welcome change from our usual sunny days, but the aftermath can bring anything but a sunny outlook. High winds, flooding and power outages are just a few of the problems caused by the change of weather; and after the novelty wears off, we can be faced with some serious problems.

"Being aware of potential problems will help you be prepared", says John Kolman, director of Maricopa County Environmental Services Department. "Cleaning up after a flood or power outage often means facing many new problems in salvaging your family's belongings, even for temporary use".

The most common after effects of storms like those we've experienced over the last few days is power outages and floods. If you experience a power outage at your home or place of business, here are some things to remember:

- 1) Try not to open your refrigerator or freezer too often. Every time it is opened the cold air will escape and the temperatures of the food will go up.
- 2) If possible, obtain dry ice for your frozen foods. Add it carefully and then leave the door closed.
- 3) When power is restored or if you are using food from the refrigerator during the outage, make sure it is in the temperature safe zone - 41° F or below.
- 4) If food goes above 41° F, it is important to know how long it is in the temperature danger zone. If the food is in the danger zone for over six hours, it should be thrown out. David Ludwig, Environmental Health Division manager, reminds everyone that, "Only some bacteria can be killed by cooking, so don't take a chance."
- 5) Make sure that you thoroughly cook all food to 165° F and take care not to cross contaminate surfaces.

Flooding can affect everything from your food supply to furniture. If your food supply has been damaged by flood waters, or if you aren't sure it is safe to eat, throw it out.

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Other things to keep in mind as you clean up after a flood are:

- 1) Injury can happen when structures weakened by flood waters collapse. Be sure all buildings are safe to enter. Keep children away from flood-contaminated areas.
- 2) Don't enter a flooded or wet building or use electrical outlets without checking with a qualified electrician (utility company, private contractor, or city/county building inspector).
- 3) Stay away from downed power lines and report loss of power or water pressure to your service provider.
- 4) Do not use contaminated water to clean up or for personal cleanliness. "It is also important to disinfect contaminated areas, including outdoors, by spreading household bleach," indicates Kevin Chadwick, Water and Waste Division manager.
- 5) Throw away flood-damaged mattresses, box springs and feather-stuffed pillows; you can wash and air-dry foam-rubber pillows. Upholstered furniture should be thrown away.

For comprehensive information about dealing with the aftermath of a flood, Environmental Services Department is making available to the public our brochure "Recovering after a flood". The brochure can be obtained at no cost in English and Spanish at any of the different Environmental Services Department locations. For addresses and office hours, please visit the department's web site: www.maricopa.gov/envsvc/.

It's also a good idea to keep key phone numbers handy for information regarding emergency food, clothing, and shelter. For power outages call your local utility company.

For more information, you may contact the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department at (602) 506-6616 and visit www.maricopa.gov/envsvc/.

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